

Why the Concept 'End of Time' Fascinates So Many

Security and well-being. More and more people are expressing concern about threats to their physical safety and psychological health.

Violence and war. In the past few years, many countries have experienced cyberattacks, data hacking, use of ransomware and physical violence. Many people appear to have become self-lovers, reckless and heartless. Certain countries seem arrogant and abusive. Are these developments signs of the end of times?

What does the phrase "the end of time" mean? Does the phrase suggest the close of an era? Does it apply to our graduation from this life to the next? Many people think about or fear "the end" as the undoing of the world as we know it. The end can be viewed as good, evil or ambiguous. The concept represents not only a religious idea, but also a fluid scenario positioned in modern science, political dialogue and conspiracy theories.

Humanity has been pondering the "end of time" concept since the beginning of recorded history; the world's major religions have developed and promulgated complicated theories regarding the topic. Each religion has its own beliefs concerning the end of the world as now known and what will follow. Previous predictions regarding the end of time have proven to be incorrect; a specific moment or day for the termination of the world as we know it now remains unrevealed.

In an article titled, "The Apocalypse as an 'Unveiling': What Religion Teaches Us About the End Times," Elizabeth Dias points out that the story of "the end of time" is ancient, "perhaps one of the oldest that humans tell." It appears as a

narrative whenever times of social and political crisis emerge. Concerns with end times take hold of peoples' thoughts and worries when individuals attempt "to process unprecedented or shocking events."

The "Big Five" world religions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Members of each religion have certain beliefs about the "end of time." These beliefs reflect the traditions of the individuals and groups embracing the particular religion, even though not all the beliefs may be shared with every member of the faith. The beliefs do, to an extent, define the religion, at least in relation to ideas regarding the future.

Many members of the Hindu religion believe that the universe goes through endless cycles of creation and destruction and human-beings remain in a sequence of death and rebirth. The cycle of birth, growth, decay and renewal occur both on the individual level and in the cosmic order.

Members also contend that the current cycle represents the last of four periods that comprise the current age. This period, as well as the previous periods have, according to numerous Hindus, seen a progressive decline in morality. Disputes and hypocrisy have become common. A god on a white horse sporting a sword capable of destroying evil should soon appear.

According to Buddhism, the universe never begins or ends. Some Buddhist prophecies suggest that a final battle, like the one predicted in Christianity, will occur, allowing good to triumph over evil and the planet to be restored. The restoration of the planet will permit people to pursue enlightenment.

Buddhists accept death as a natural part of the life cycle, and believe rebirth follows death. Buddhist doctrine asserts that a person's spirit remains close after the person's death and seeks out a new body and new life.

The Buddhist religion integrates several doctrines. When a person dies, she/he may gain entrance into heaven or hell or even another human existence, the choice somewhat depending on the person's deeds while living this life. Assignment to heaven or hell is, however, temporary, continuing only until the individual experiences another rebirth. The main objective of Buddhists is to attain "a condition beyond being or nonbeing."

The three most prominent religions active in the United States are Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Bible aficionados cite the three as Abrahamic religions, linking them to the biblical figure Abraham, and the significant role he played in each of the religious traditions. All three religions refer to their sacred texts to discover Abraham's history.

In an article titled, "How the World's Religions View Apocalypticism," Patrick J Kiger wrote that some Christians accept that the New Testament book of Revelation clearly describes the final battle between God and the forces of evil. Prior to that battle, an earthquake, lightening and a disastrous hailstorm should occur. After some time, Jesus will descend from heaven on horseback accompanied by a white-clad army of horsemen. He will confront and defeat a minion of the evil one, and an angel will cast the evil one into a bottomless pit.

Muslims often associate "the end of time" with the return of Jesus to the earth followed by the Last Judgment. Those individuals who have lived worthy lives will enter paradise; people who have done evil will fall into hell. The Kaaba, the pilgrimage sanctuary of the Islamic world, will disappear, and the copies of the Qur'an, the Holy Book, will become empty paper. The end of time will soon follow these unfortunate developments.

Judaism remains concerned with 'the end of days.' The concept focuses on what can be expected to occur at the 'end of time,'

including the gathering of the exiled diaspora, the appearance of the Jewish Messiah, life after death and the comeback of the dead. Jews' belief in an afterlife with reward or punishment did not originally exist as part of the Jewish creed and apparently developed over time. ()

Hebrew prophecy predicts battles for "end times" and mentions days that God might bring about death and destruction to people who deserve punishment. Israel will fight enemies rather than an anti-Christ. The term Judaism speaks to a particular way of life and an outlook regarding the future which pays respect to history and prophecy.

Many of the assumptions and much of the literature regarding "end times" has long been based on tradition, but new scientific knowledge may be supporting and adding to the historical content and concepts. New science is advanced by research from motivated scientists who desire to affect the enterprise by prioritizing ethics and moral development.

Science concerns the natural world and religion deals with both the natural and supernatural worlds, making reconcilability between the two concepts possible. Attempts to pit science and religion beliefs against each other ultimately prove futile.

Speculation about the "end of time" has fascinated politicians, religious leaders and members of numerous spiritually-oriented groups for generations, but the realities of the concept have remained elusive. Objectively reviewing the concept within the combined framework of religion and science might unleash truths that could contribute to the solution of the yet unsolved "end of days" puzzle.

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